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OUR JAIL-BIRDS.

A SHORT time ago, we had business in the office of the governor of one of our county jails. In an adjoining room, we noticed a group of about half-a-dozen people—men, women, and children all being represented; and, as their appearance left little doubt as to their character, we ventured the question: 'Are those some of your clients just come in?' 'Yes,' was the reply; 'and the worst of it is they have all been here before. It doesn't say very much for our reformatory discipline, does it?'

Such is the universal experience of our jail governors, and of all who have anything to do with the administration of justice; the same faces are seen again and again, and imprisonment seems to have no deterrent effect whatever, but rather the reverse. 'For one prisoner reformed,' says a late high-sheriff of London and Middlesex, 'many are corrupted; and it is to be feared that, in the great majority of cases, imprisonment gives an impetus in the downward course of the convict.' The Inspectors-general of Prisons in Ireland, in their Report for last year, state that one-third of the males committed in the year, and above half the females, were old offenders. Of the 6421 females committed in the year, 1946 were recommitted more than once in the same year; 634 of these women had been in jail twenty-one times or more; 44, a hundred times; one, two hundred and forty-four times; and one, two hundred and eighty-eight times. It is well remarked, that it is a blot on the prison-system that there are women who occupy the jails of the country month after month, and year after year, some spending eight, nine, or ten months of the year in prison, and occasionally being recommitted within a few days or hours after being discharged. In England, matters may be somewhat better than they are in Ireland, but there are numerous cases in which offenders have been committed to jail ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred, and even two hundred times. Not very long ago, Mr Hibbert, M.P., stated, at the Manchester Sessions, that there were then in Salford jail two prisoners, one of whom had

been committed eighty-three times, and another a hundred and fifty times. In 1869, a woman was committed to Liverpool jail on six consecutive Mondays; and at the Bristol police court, about six months ago, an offender of the same sex was committed for the two hundred and fifty-first time. From Scotland, too, we receive similar testimony: in Dundee prison, in 1869, there were fifty-three prisoners who had each been in jail more than fifty times. All these statistics go to shew that the term 'our criminal population' is no misnomer. Some of those who suffer imprisonment may be regarded as accidental offenders, but we have amongst us a whole army whose distinguishing characteristic is that they are habitually criminal. All through their lives, they prey upon us, either within or without our jails, and our treatment of them utterly fails to reclaim them from their evil ways, and to rid us of the burdens which they impose upon us. Vagrants, drunkards, professional thieves abound on every side; and if they happen to be convicted, they leave prison again only to enter upon and keep up a fresh career of laziness and crime, until they fall once more into the hands of the police.

It might be thought from these facts that our prison discipline is not sufficiently stringent, and that harder fare and more severe punishment would have the desired effect. It was the fashion, a while ago, to compare our workhouses and our jails, and a sort of idea got abroad that, because the latter were more comfortable than the former, their inmates were treated far too well. The lesson, however, to be gained from the comparison was rather, that many of our paupers were treated with a culpable want of regard for their comfort, than that our prisoners were treated too luxuriously. There may be exceptional prisons in which the fare is too liberal and the discipline too lax; but in the great majority of cases, the lot of those who are confined in our jails is by no means to be envied. Their diet, though wholesome, is of the plainest description, and of the most unvarying sameness, and is doled out to them in quantities only just sufficient to keep them in health; their

cells are clean and airy, it is true, but cleanliness and pure air are two blessings on which they are not likely to set much value; they are subjected to a seclusion and a strict discipline which must be irksome in the extreme to those who have been accustomed to set aside even the ordinary restraints of law and society; their 'hard labour'—the tread-wheel, the crank, and the shot-drill—is of the most uninteresting and wearying character, and so severe that many who are sentenced to it are found by the surgeons to be unable to undergo it. Yet, notwithstanding the hardship of prison-life—hardship which is fully felt by those who have to endure it—the convict returns again and again, until, probably, he commits at last some offence of a serious character, and becomes a burden upon society 'for the term of his natural life.'

Not long ago, a prisoner in one of our jails, sentenced to hard labour, resolutely refused to do the shot-drill, on account of its severity. His rations were reduced—still he refused; then he was consigned to the dark cell, which is usually a most powerful persuasive, for even a desperate criminal has often a great dread of darkness—but his obstinacy was still unshaken. The magistrates at length gave authority for him to be flogged, as it was necessary that discipline should be maintained; and he was tied up, and received a dozen lashes. The 'cat' brought him to submission; and after his back was healed, he went into the yard, and did his shot-drill without further trouble. When his sentence had expired, and he was leaving the prison, he said to the governor: 'You will never see me here again—I can tell you that.' His experience of prison-life had been anything but such as to tempt him to renew his acquaintance with it; yet, in the course of a few weeks, the same man was committed to the very same jail for another term of hard labour.

Severity of punishment, it would thus appear, is altogether powerless to deter the prisoner from future crime. Experience shews that those who have been subjected to it are quite as likely to return to jail as those who have received milder treatment. The chaplain of one of our large jails reports that not only were there forty-three per cent. of recommitments of prisoners who had previously undergone the punishment of the tread-wheel in that jail, but that the increase of the percentage of recommitments of prisoners who had passed over the wheel had been beyond that of those subjected to ordinary and less severe discipline.

The solution of the matter is to be found in the remarks of some of the prisoners themselves, who say: 'What else can we do when we leave jail but steal?' Crime is with many of them a second nature, inherited, it may be, from their parents, and growing with their growth; they have been accustomed all their lives long to prey in some form or other upon their more honest neighbours; they know no other means of obtaining a livelihood; and though they have no love for jail, they are compelled, in order to keep body and soul together, to run the risk of being overtaken by justice, and, sooner or later, they again find their way to prison. Official statistics shew that about ninety-five per cent. of those who are committed to jail are unable to read or write with facility, and a large proportion are totally unable to do

either; less than ten per cent. belong to the professional, the trading, and the skilled mechanical classes combined. In jail or out of jail, therefore, they are compelled to 'live upon the public.'

If we would prevent the return of our prisoners to their evil lives, we must fit them to be honest men and to obtain an honest living; we must convince them that labour is more advantageous than crime, and we must take care that they acquire the knowledge and the skill necessary to enable them to perform such labour. To turn them from the doors of our jails, often without a farthing, with no power to work, and no means of obtaining employment, with the strength of their old habits still upon them, and temptation all around them, is surely a most efficient manner of inviting them back again.

If our prisoners, instead of being condemned to the useless and degrading labour of the crank, the shot-drill, and the tread-wheel, profitable neither to themselves nor to the public, were taught and employed in useful trades, we might have a reasonable hope that they would employ themselves honestly when set at liberty again; for not only would they have a means of earning a livelihood at command, but they would acquire habits of industry and self-control which they now altogether lack. In the Report of the United States Prison Congress held in Cincinnati last October, it is stated that 'steady, active, honourable labour is the basis of all reformatory discipline; it not only aids reformation, but is essential to it.' Experience both in the United States and in other countries fully verifies the statement. From a Report by the governor of the Maine State Prison, where each convict is taught a trade, we learn that of two hundred convicts discharged during five years, only seven (or three-and-a-half per cent.) have been reconvicted; ninety per cent. of the convicts were ignorant of any trade when they entered the prison. To realise the value of the above statement, we must remember that the recommitments of criminals in England average forty per cent. During the fifteen years' administration of Valencia Prison, Spain, by Colonel Montesinos, he introduced forty-three different trades, allowing each man to choose which he would learn, and encouraging industrial habits by permitting a liberal percentage of the profits to be earned by the prisoners for their aid on their discharge. The number of inmates averaged a thousand; and the result, we are told, is that the prisoners are diligent, contented, cheerful, and obedient, and that recommitments have been brought down from fifty per cent. to zero; for during the last three years of his administration not a man came back who had been in the prison before. In India, where a large number of useful occupations are carried on by the prisoners, the results are eminently satisfactory. Major Urmoston, an Indian officer, collected a number of Hindu thieves and rogues, and placed them in a particular district of the Punjab, allotted land, tools, and seeds to each, and compelled them to work for a livelihood, under penalty of hunger or the lash. The men soon settled to work, eventually became industrious subjects, and in two years from their compulsory colonisation, invited the major to a feast on the fruits of their toil. So far as the system of useful labour has been adopted in our own prisons—and it has been to a small extent—the results have been most promising. The directors

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of British convict prisons say that the profitable employment of prisoners certainly has better results as a reformatory influence than useless labour. 'Make men diligent, and you will make them honest,' was the opinion of John Howard, and such is the principle on which we ought to treat our criminals.

In benefiting them in this respect, we should benefit ourselves also, not only by lessening the number of criminals in the future, but by lessening their cost in the present. So far from our present treatment of them resulting in 'reparation to society for injury done,' it entails a most costly burden upon us. The administration of justice and the punishment of criminals costs us upwards of four millions per annum. Of this sum, £829,000 represents the cost of our borough and county jails, whilst the total value of prison-labour in them is only £40,000. The average cost of each prisoner, deducting all the proceeds of his labour, is £29 per annum; so that, instead of obtaining restitution from those who have robbed or otherwise injured us, we are compelled to pay for the maintenance and punishment of each of them as much as many of our labouring population obtain for the whole support of their families. In this matter, our go-ahead cousins over the water set us an example which we should do well to imitate. By the adoption of useful labour, instead of profitless punishment, in their prisons, they are enabled not only to make their criminals support themselves during their detention, but to secure from them considerable compensation for the crimes of which they have been guilty. In twenty-one years, the gross earnings of the inmates of Albany Prison have amounted to £125,000, whilst the expenditure has only been £97,000, so that there has been a profit to the state of £28,000. In ten years, the net earnings in Weathersfield State Prison have been sufficient to pay every expense of erection, support, and management, and leave a balance of upwards of £2000. In Massachusetts State Prison, £5000 per annum is cleared after paying all expenses. In Maine State Prison, to which we have already referred, a profit of £1500 per annum is realised. In Alabama State Prison, the profit amounts to £3000 per annum; and Georgia, Michigan, and Ohio all return profits, after clearing all expenses. In France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and Germany, remunerative prison-labour is largely adopted, with the most satisfactory results. It is to be hoped that the 'World's Prison Congress,' which is to be held in London next June, will be the means of directing more attention in our own country to this important subject, and that more decided efforts will be made to render our system of prison-discipline at once reformatory to the dishonest, and remunerative to the public who suffer from their depredations.

These two objects must not be dissociated. Hitherto, such efforts as have been made in the matter have been too exclusively directed to the question of profit, and the advantage to the prisoner himself has not been sufficiently considered. Hence, mat-making and weaving have been almost the only employments in our prisons, where useful labour of any kind has been adopted. Doubtless they have been chosen because they are trades easily learned, and the produce of the latter can be utilised in the jails themselves; whilst the produce of the former may be disposed of out of doors

without much trouble. But it is of little advantage to a prisoner to teach him a trade which is confined to particular districts, and which may not be carried on at all in the neighbourhood in which he receives his discharge. It is evident, too, that if the system of useful employment were carried out on a large scale in our prisons, it would not do to throw into the labour-market a host of people qualified for one or two particular trades. The trades taught should be as various as possible, so that there would be no difficulty for a discharged prisoner to find employment near at hand, and no unfair competition in any special branches of trade. Advantage could then be taken of any previous training or any special aptitude possessed by the individual prisoners.

It would be necessary, for the successful carrying out of such a system of instruction and employment in our prisons, that the sentences should be longer than those usually inflicted at present. A term of a few days or weeks is too short to allow of either instruction or reformation; and there is no good reason why a man, directly he is seen to be a confirmed offender—whether vagrant, drunkard, or thief—should not be kept in confinement sufficiently long to allow of his being made a useful member of society. The continued reiteration of short sentences is worse than useless, inducing that familiarity with conviction which certainly breeds contempt, and having no beneficial effect whatever on the offender. If an alteration in the law be necessary before any improvement in this respect can be effected, the sooner the alteration is made the better.

The employment of prisoners in useful labour has been objected to on the ground that criminals ought not to be qualified, at public expense, to compete with honest men. People who raise such an objection must overlook the fact, that those who are not competing with honest men, ought to be doing so, and would be doing so, if they were not doing far worse—that is, robbing honest men. A thief, undoubtedly, takes more out of the pockets of honest people than he would do if he were a working-man. When we hear of a single receiver of stolen goods in Birmingham saving upwards of eleven thousand pounds in a few years, we may form some idea of the vast amount which our thieves cost us when they are pursuing their dishonest profession. It must be remembered, too, that, on the average, there is only one person in jail to a thousand out of jail, and one additional worker amongst a population of a thousand could take but very little bread out of the mouths of his fellows. We have already said that the trades taught should be as various as possible, so that there might be no unfair competition in any one particular branch.

Another objection which has been raised is, that ordinary work could not be made sufficiently severe to be such a punishment as criminals ought to be subjected to. But the labour of ordinary trades may be made as severe as the most rigorous advocate for punishment can desire, if it be continued sufficiently long. In jails where task-work at ordinary employments has been appointed, the prisoners have asked that they might go upon the tread-wheel in preference, the labour being less trying; and it must be evident that excessive work of any kind is a severe infliction.

Reformation, however, rather than punishment,

should be the end in view. If we can secure that our criminals shall be transformed into honest and useful members of society, and at the same time make us some recompense for their bygone misdeeds, we need not grudge them relief from a degrading kind of toil. Many of them are more deserving of pity than of punishment; and work that is useful and remunerative will most certainly be more beneficial both to them and to us than the useless labour of the crank and the tread-wheel.

CECIL'S TRYST.

CHAPTER XXX.—'SPEED, HANSOM, SPEED.'

THOUGH I woke next morning to find myself famous as the author of that highly successful little drama, the *Foot-page*, the remembrance of my promise to take Cecil to Laburnum Villa weighed down my spirits, and filled me with a presentiment of evil. In vain Lady Repton read aloud at breakfast three-quarters of a column of eulogium from the Thunderer itself, Aunt Ben observing: 'Very true, I'm sure,' at every laudatory adjective, and dear Nelly squeezing my hand under the table. As kings and laws are said to mitigate but little human distresses, so does public favour fail to remedy one's private grief. Amid all the praise and congratulation that poured in upon me that morning, I was sick at heart with the apprehension of the impending meeting between Cecil and Ruth. In the wild excitement of the preceding night, I had attached but slight importance to it, and had even, as I have narrated, been the very one to introduce her to him, though not in her proper person; but now, as I reviewed the matter calmly, I could hardly believe that I had played so rash a part, and, still worse, had undertaken to repeat it. Recognition (as it seemed to me by miracle) had not taken place on the first occasion, so far as Cecil was concerned; but it was quite certain to do so on the second. For some reason or other, which I could not fathom, Ruth was evidently bent upon discovering herself; and I knew the vigour and determination of her character too well by this time to doubt that, even if I refused to aid her, she would find other means to accomplish her purpose. As regarded Cecil, I positively dreaded, as the result of this interview, no less a calamity than the loss of his reason. His behaviour had been occasionally so very strange and unaccountable, his habits were become so peculiar, and he was altogether so altered from the man he had been, that the balance of his mind seemed to me to be most insecure, and liable to be destroyed by any shock. It may well be asked, if such were my apprehensions, how could I have so easily consented to let him accompany me to the theatre, far less behind the scenes, and into the very presence of Ruth herself; but as to the first, I had no possible excuse for dissuading him, since I had always pressed and urged him to visit such scenes, in order to distract him from his melancholy; and as to the second, I can only reply

what I have already said, that I was half-demented myself by the excitement of my dramatic triumph.

When I now recalled his words and air in reply to my inquiry, six months ago or so, whether he would like to see Ruth again or not, I fairly trembled. It was just possible, it is true, that the approaching meeting might have the best possible effect upon my poor cousin. Love might once more resume its sway over him, and that with such passion and power as to sweep away all his morbid thoughts like cobwebs; but, on the other hand, the sight of Ruth might re-open the half-healed wound made by the accusation of Batty, and recall all the bitter memories of his more recent past as well. These last, indeed, seemed to be ever present with him, as it was; but while they were so, there was at least no room in his breast for other troubles. If the matter turned out ill, he would, naturally enough, reproach me with my deception; though, after all, that had been forced upon me. I had passed my word to Ruth not to disclose her identity to Cecil; and my cousin, on his part, had not only expressed but little anxiety on her account, but announced his determination not to see her, even should she be found. Their position in regard to one another was, in fact, inexplicable to me in both cases. While Jane was alive, Ruth had evidently acquiesced with cheerfulness in her separation from Cecil; and it would not, I verily believe, have much distressed her had she been told that they were never to meet again. When Cecil returned without his sister, however, I felt sure that Ruth had desired her relations with her old love to be renewed; nor was I surprised at it, for reasons that I have already given. But what did astound me was that, after she had seen him, and found him so unlike his dear old self, so indifferent to their past—for what but indifference could possibly have rendered her unrecognisable to him—and so consumed with sorrow for one in whose fate she had not only felt no pang, but even a sense of satisfaction and relief—I say what did astound me was, that *now* she should not only wish to see him, but should have insisted upon it, and even asked him to her own house.

Of one thing I was quite certain—that re-awakened love had nothing to do with it. If I had last night fancied—for I had scarcely been in a condition to use my judgment—that Cecil himself had been struck anew by the charms of Ruth in the person of Miss Brabant, the feeling had certainly not been reciprocal. She had been obviously annoyed and hurt by his conduct towards her; if her heart had been touched, she could never have coquetted with him as she had done. Then why did she want to see him? Perhaps only to take revenge upon him for his forgetfulness of her. And, indeed, at times he did seem to have forgotten her altogether. A curious instance of this had taken place with reference to the letters he had enclosed to me for Ruth, and which (as it will be remembered) she had declined to receive, and bidden me burn. I had not burned them, because it struck me that if Cecil should come back to England he would, naturally enough, demand from me their return; and when he did come back, and omitted to do so, I took an opportunity of reminding him that I was still in possession of them.

'Letters?' cried he, putting his hand to his

forehead. 'Letters that I wrote to Ruth? What letters?'

If he had asked, What Ruth? I could scarcely have been more astonished; but it was a peculiarity of his strange mental condition, and one which most caused us apprehension, that his memory upon all subjects (except those connected with his sister) would suddenly fail him and become a blank. It is no wonder, then, taking all things into consideration, that I felt anxiety about this coming interview, and a very strong personal disinclination to be present at it. It was cowardly, no doubt; but after all, as I argued with myself, what good could my presence effect? If my cousin and Ruth should wish to throw themselves into one another's arms, my company would be very embarrassing to them; and if, on the other hand, they should upbraid one another, I had no apology to offer for either of them. I well knew what Aunt Ben and Nelly would have advised me to do in the matter, and what they would have done themselves—especially if they had known of Cecil's conduct that dreadful night at the hotel: they would not have deserted him in the coming ordeal. I did not, therefore, consult them in the affair, or tell them a word about it, and tried to persuade myself that it was to spare their feelings. 'Surely,' I now reflect, looking back upon that eventful day from quite another stand-point, 'the old bond of friendship between my cousin and myself must have been much loosened, to have permitted me so to act;' and yet I was positively convinced that, notwithstanding the sad change in him for the worse, in all other respects—and even in his *manner* towards me—his affection for myself was to the full as warm and genuine as ever.

It had been arranged that I was to call for Cecil at his hotel at mid-day, and take him on with me to Laburnum Villa; but I now wrote him word that I would meet him there instead, for which a fortunate excuse offered itself in the departure of Lady Repton, whom it was no more than bare politeness that I should accompany to the railway station; and this I did. She was very sorry to leave us, for (with the exception of my cousin) she had probably found us more genial associates—for my Aunt Ben forgot all her dislike when playing the hostess—than she was wont to meet with at her own stately home, and had parted from Nelly especially with effusion. She was full of her praises, and profuse in her auguries for our future happiness; and in acknowledging them, I expressed my regret that my poor cousin had not the good-fortune to possess an Eleanor, who might wile him from his melancholy mood back to his old self.

'He *did* have a *tendresse*, as you have doubtless heard, years ago at Gatcombe, with that beautiful creature whom he rescued from the sand-cave, Ruth Waller.'

'That's the name, and now I've got it!' cried Lady Repton triumphantly.

'Got what?' said I, affecting to misunderstand her, though I guessed pretty well what was coming.

'Well, upon my word, Master Fred., you *must* be in love. Cupid is blind, one knows, but I always thought his blindness was only in reference to the beloved object. But no'—Here she stopped, and looked exceedingly disconcerted. 'And yet, of course, that could not be the case either, or else your cousin would have known her.'

'Known whom?'

'Well, I was just on the point of discovering a mare's nest. The fact is, as I sat at the play last night, I was haunted by the recollection of some face—I could not remember whose—in connection with Miss Brabant; and when you mentioned Ruth Waller, I seemed all of a sudden to have found the key to it.'

'So you have,' said I, smiling. 'Miss Brabant is Ruth Waller; only, you must keep it a dead secret, please, for *all* our sakes.'

'For all your sakes,' repeated Lady Repton gravely, 'I am sorry for this, Fred.; I am more sorry than I can say. I am not a strait-laced person, my dear boy—don't lace half tight *enough*, indeed, as some people say—but I don't like such goings on as these. Young men will be young men, I know; but that's a phrase that is made use of to excuse a deal of villainy. Under your aunt's roof, and with Eleanor by your side, you should not, in my opinion, be playing into your cousin's hands in this way. If he likes the girl, there is no excuse—since he has plenty of money—for his not marrying her. I was an actress once myself, and perhaps that makes me feel strongly upon the point; indeed, I should not like to say to you *what* I feel about it, Master Fred., because we might quarrel; but if that girl goes to the bad, remember, it will be partly your fault. I honestly believe that I should be only doing my duty if I wrote to your Aunt Benita, and told her the whole story—for you may be sure I know it.'

These words were delivered with such amazing volubility and indignation, that I was quite unable to interrupt them; but while she stopped to take breath, I hastened to set her right.

'If you wrote to Aunt Ben to-morrow, my dear Lady Repton, you could tell her no news; both she and Nelly know that Miss Brabant and Ruth are the same person. It is only my cousin who is not aware of it.'

'Cecil not aware? Your cousin Cecil not know it?' Her Ladyship looked aghast.

'Last night was the first time, I should have told you, Lady Repton, that my cousin had had the opportunity of seeing Ruth since he left Gatcombe. We had purposely concealed from him the fact of her identity with Miss Brabant; and but for you, he would never have gone to the play at all, or run the chance of meeting her. I was not surprised that he did not recognise her upon the stage; but afterwards, when he insisted upon accompanying me behind the scenes, I confess I thought he could not fail to have done so. Yet I am bound to say that I was myself in her company for a quarter of an hour, when she was less disguised, too, than yesterday, and on that occasion she deceived *me*, though, like yourself, I had a vague recollection that I had seen her, or some one like her, elsewhere.'

'You? Yes, that might be,' exclaimed Lady Repton scornfully. 'But nothing will persuade me that she deceived your cousin. He may have had his reasons for ignoring her, but that he did know her is certain. Depend upon it, he has some design in it—not a very creditable one, perhaps.—Do you know, Fred.,' added she gravely, while I was turning over this novel view of the subject in my mind, 'I never saw so great a change in any man for the worse as in your cousin Cecil! I don't speak of his mere melancholy, but his whole

nature is soured and distorted. He seems to have no affection left for any one, except it be for *yourself*, and he cannot have much of that, since he thought of absenting himself from the first night's performance of your play.'

'Nay, but,' said I thoughtfully, 'in case you are right in your impression that Cecil is not deceived as to Ruth, but only pretends to be, he may have discovered who she was long ago, and declined to attend the performance on that very account. As there are none so deaf as those who don't wish to hear, he, of course, gave no sign of recognition; but then, again, he would surely have refused, even at your bidding, to go with me, as he did, into her very presence. Besides, he has accepted her invitation to go and see her to-day at her own house.'

'Alone?' asked Lady Repton; 'or in your company?'

'Well, he was to have gone with *me*; but the fact is, I—I'—

'You got out of it,' said her Ladyship quietly. 'You thought there might be some unpleasant scene, and therefore made use of my departure as an excuse to avoid it. That is so like a man! Your father, however, would not have done so, Master Fred. What time were they to meet?'

'At one,' said I. 'Cecil is very punctual, and has already seen her, without doubt.'

'I am sorry for it,' observed my companion sentimentally. 'There was an unmistakable look of alarm in her expressive features.'

'Well,' said I, 'they must either quarrel or make it up. It can be nothing very serious, after all.'

'I don't know that, Fred,' said she slowly. 'The only tragedy of real life to which I was ever a witness, took place under some such circumstances as the present. If your cousin has recognised Ruth, he must have some very strong reason for ignoring her; while she, on the contrary, must be bent indeed upon *her* purpose (whatever that may be), to have thus invited him to her own house, after the slight he has put upon her. It will be a terrible interview, you may depend upon it. There will be bitter recriminations and stinging words. Heaven grant there may be no worse!'

'What!' said I; 'do you suppose that Cecil is capable of harming a woman, and especially one that he has once loved, as he did Ruth, nay, whom, moreover, as I believe, he still loves?'

'If he still loves, he would not avoid her,' returned my companion; 'nor, on the other hand, would he fail to know her. No, no; he loves her not, Fred. But it is not of Cecil that I am afraid, but *for* him. We women, when we are injured, are very dangerous; we have this much of the nature of the serpent that tempted our first mother: when trodden on, we turn and bite.'

'Great Heaven!' cried I. 'Do you mean that, in her passion, she might stab him?'

'I do,' said she quietly; 'and I know some that would forgive her if she did. He is an altered man, even we ourselves admit; but what must he appear to *her*, to whom he paid his vows, and promised to be faithful until death! So changed in two short years, that he repudiates her to her face, as we cut a disagreeable acquaintance in the street!—Yes, Fred., you are right! I had pulled the check-string while she was speaking, and stopped the brougham. 'You must see to this at once,

and Heaven grant that you may find all well with both of them!'

With a hearty clasp of the hand, I left my companion to pursue her way with her maid (whom she called in from her seat upon the box), and jumped into a Hansom cab. How bitterly I reproached myself with my selfishness in not having accompanied my cousin that morning! I felt that Lady Repton's words were weighty in any case; but in this (when the idea of violence was once presented to me), how natural it seemed that a girl like Ruth, impulsive and hot-blooded, though capable, as I knew, of deep and generous feeling, might be hurried into some rash act she might regret her whole life long, but for which she could never make atonement! They must already have been an hour together, and I was at least half an hour's drive from Laburnum Villa. My driver did his best, and urged his horse (it was a white one, and I well remember how his hairs came out, and covered me like a snow-storm) to his full speed; and yet I seemed to have never been driven so slowly.

CHAPTER XXXI.—INEXPLICABLE.

When I came in sight of Laburnum Villa, it was a positive relief to me that there were at least no external signs of a catastrophe; that its white walls shone brightly in the sun, unstained by blood; that there was no crowd within its well-ordered little garden, no clamour about its porched door. Everything, indeed, looked much as usual, except that the drawing-room window was closed, which it was Ruth's habit to keep open almost throughout the year, her old Gatcombe habits of outdoor life making fresh air indispensable to her. Perhaps they were sitting in that very room together, reconciled, and only waiting for my friendly voice to congratulate them on their happiness; perhaps— But I did not dare to picture to myself what my heart foreboded. It struck me that the house was stiller than usual; the cook was not singing at her work below-stairs, as was generally the case; nor was the gaily dressed little *soubrette*, Fantine, at the lower window, on the look-out for the baker or the policeman. At the thought of the policeman, quite a shudder ran through me, and I rang the bell with a trembling hand. The servant was much longer than usual in replying to my summons; but she came at last, looking pale and disturbed, and without the smile with which she generally favoured me, as a dramatic author patronised by her young mistress.

'Miss Brabant is not at home this morning, sir,' said she, in answer to my inquiry.

'That is impossible,' said I: 'I had an appointment with her for one o'clock.'

'Yes, sir; so she said. But since you did not come in time, she went out immediately after lunch. She bade me say that she was very sorry to have missed you.'

'Did she go out alone?'

'Yes, sir; no lady has called this morning.'

The manner with which this remark was made was even more worthy of admiration than the sentiment it conveyed: it would have become the mouth of the *conciERGE* of a nunnery.

'A gentleman has called to-day, as I happen to know,' replied I quietly, 'for we were to have come together. Now' (here I slipped five shillings

into Fantine's hand), 'is he here still, or has he gone?'

'He has gone, sir—upon my solemn oath,' returned the girl, desirous, doubtless, of giving a full measure of assurance to so liberal an inquirer.

'But your mistress is in, Fantine, I feel convinced.'

'She says she is not, sir,' returned the girl naively; 'and I suppose she ought to know.' Then she added, with sudden gravity: 'The truth is, she is in, Mr Wray; but she cannot see anybody. Something—I don't know what—has terribly upset her. She cannot see even you, or attend to business of any sort.'

'But it is not business about which I am come, Fantine; it is something quite different—something connected with the very matter which you say has distressed her; and I hope to do her good.'

'Then come in, sir, in Heaven's name!' said Fantine, with a sudden collapse of her bright manner, and bursting into tears. 'My dear mistress is quite beside herself about something or other. It's all, as I believe, on account of that black young gentleman as called this morning, and whom you say you know. How ever my mistress could allow herself to be put out for a party of that kind!—for my part, I should as soon think of breaking my heart for an African Serenader! But there, so it is; and if you can bring her any comfort, I'm sure you'll be welcome, though she did say: "Not at home, Fantine; not even to Mr Wray."'

With that compliment, so delicately insinuated, and with a look to match that seemed to say: 'Black or white, there is nobody she loves like you,' the damsel swept away her tears with the back of her plump hand, and ran up-stairs. She was a long time absent, during which I heard whispered talk in the drawing-room above, but at last she returned with a sealed envelope addressed to myself. I broke it open, and read these words: 'You had better not see me, Mr Fred., much better not, I think. If, however, after that expression of my opinion, you still deem it right to press your request, come up.' This note did not give me a moment's hesitation. I could easily imagine that the interview would be a painful one to both of us; but I was resolved not to shirk my duty a second time. I motioned to Fantine to lead the way up-stairs.

'She is so altered that you will scarcely know her,' whispered the soubrette sorrowfully. 'She has already sent to the theatre to excuse herself from acting to-night.'

Fantine had not exaggerated the change in her mistress's appearance, as she held out her hand to greet me, without moving from the sofa on which she lay. Her eyes were red with weeping; and over her face, streaked with the traces of tears, her hair fell in tangled masses. When she had worn those false black tresses, she had not looked so little like herself as she did now with her own.

'I am very sorry, Rue,' said I, 'to see you thus. I was not without hope that, in place of this misery, I should have found all well.'

She shook her head, with such a sick, despairing smile as was far worse than tears.

'Come, Ruth,' said I, taking her hand, which was quite cold, in mine; 'I cannot but think that you take too gloomy a view of matters. I wish I had been here when Cecil came.'

'You? No, no! I am glad you were not,' returned she, with a sort of shudder. 'I am sorry you came now—so soon; I am not equal to it.'

'I am sorry too,' dear Ruth,' said I, 'if that be so. I should not have come, after the note you sent me down, but that I thought so old a friend as I—a common friend to both—might be of use to heal a breach, or'—

'There is no breach,' interrupted she impatiently. 'I cannot tell you what has happened; but it is nothing that you can guess.'

'Dear Ruth,' said I, 'forgive me if I seem officious or importunate; but I owe it not only to yourself, but to poor Cecil, to do my utmost in this matter. I feel that I myself have been to blame'—

'No, no,' she interposed again in a fretful tone; 'you are not to blame. You have done no harm. You can do no good.'

'Nevertheless,' continued I, 'at the risk of your displeasure, Ruth, which I should be very sorry to incur, I must say a few words. I am the only friend that my cousin has now left to him, and bound to speak on his behalf. I feel sure that whatever he has said to-day, or however strange his previous conduct may have seemed to you, he loves you in his heart. I know his nature well, and though it has doubtless suffered from the shock of his sister's death, he will be himself again one day—the same true, faithful, earnest-hearted man he was. He is still loyal to you. I have seen him among others of your sex, not so beautiful as yourself, indeed, but fair and young, who, aware of his great wealth, have shewn their willingness to share it with him—to become his wife; and they might as well have smiled upon a marble statue.'

'I can believe it,' said Ruth quietly.

'It is so, on my soul!' continued I. 'He loves no other woman in the world but you, nor will he ever love one.'

She did not contradict me, but only closed her eyes, as though to shut out my appealing looks, and sighed.

'There are two things alone, Ruth, that bar him from making you his own: the one, that cloud of mystery which still hangs over the fate of your poor brother; the other, a morbid feeling in connection with his sister Jane, whose opposition to your marriage he seems strangely enough to respect in death more than he did in life. As to the first, I must confess that it appears to me unlikely that the secret, if there be one, will be ever now revealed. Nay, Cecil himself is of that opinion, for he told me so.'

'And so am I,' said Ruth.

Her tone was so gravely confident—which on this point it had never been before—that I turned amazed towards her; but she had put her handkerchief to her eyes, doubtless to dry the tears which my reference to her brother's death had caused to flow afresh, and its folds concealed her features.

'And yet,' urged I, 'he has never referred to the matter since his return to England, except upon that one occasion, whereas of old he used to talk and write of nothing else. From this I gather hope that time is weakening the hold of that event upon his mind.'

I paused, but Ruth did not reply.

'You do not deny this, Ruth? You think with me that he is getting over it?'

'It may be so,' said she, still keeping her face concealed. 'But that would make no difference.' She did not speak with the despairing calm that seemed to fit such a reply, but with quiet coldness, as though she were only stating a matter of fact.

'But if it is so,' urged I, 'then one of these two obstacles is being removed, however slowly; and is it to be supposed that this much more morbid and unnatural feeling with respect to Jane will endure when *that* is gone, or so strongly as to condemn him to loveless solitude?'

She was gazing at me now with a strange weird look, quite new to her fair face, so long as I had known it; and with a strange harsh voice she made reply: 'Have you said your say? Have you quite done? I have listened very patiently, though your words were torture. It would be no use, I told you; and it is no use. Pray, leave me, Master Fred.' The touch of tenderness implied in the use of my old name, gave me still a gleam of hope.

'Dear Rue,' said I, 'by the memory of those old days in which he wooed you first, I beseech you, do not steel your heart against my unhappy cousin. However you may wrap yourself in scorn and coldness, I am well convinced that he is dear to you as you to him. Come, once for all, do you not love poor Cecil?'

She burst into a flood of passionate tears, then turned upon me with angry vehemence. 'You are cruel and unkind,' sobbed she, 'and I will hear no more. It is too much, too hard! I cannot bear it! What is it that you want to hear, sir? Are you anxious to watch every pang—like some hard-hearted doctor, who dissects a miserable creature while it is still alive—in order that you may set them down in writing, for your plays? I have told you, or if I have not done so, I tell you now, that all is over between your cousin and myself!—that we shall never meet again this side the grave!'

I rose, alarmed as well as shocked. She spoke like one possessed, so that her tidings, grievous as they were, were made thrice as positive and hopeless by the tone and air with which they were conveyed.

'This is bad news, indeed, Ruth,' said I. 'I did not understand that matters had gone so far, and so ill, or I would not have pained you by a fruitless interference. Cecil, at least, shall be saved, at your expense, from similar distress—unless, indeed, you should wish me to urge anything from you.'

'There is nothing to urge, nothing to say,' said she, now quietly enough, and indeed she seemed quite spent and weary: 'all is settled for the best, however bad; and besides, you will not see him more.'

'I not see him? You surely must be dreaming, Ruth.'

'If so, it is a ghastly dream,' was her reply. 'No, you will never see your cousin more; but he will write to you. Whatever his letter may ask you to do—however strange his request may seem—accede to it; and ask no more questions, at least of me.'

With those last words upon her lips, she fell back on the cushion—on which she had been supporting herself upon her elbow—exhausted and half-fainting. I ran to the door, and summoned Fantine, who, seeing her mistress's condition, cast upon me a reproachful glance.

'A gentleman should know when he is not wanted,' said she indignantly. 'I told you how it would be. Perhaps you can let *yourself* out at the hall-door'—a hint which, too remorseful to be chafallen, I hastened to obey.

MEUM AND TUUM IN WAR.

The distinction between *meum* and *tuum* is a branch of knowledge not difficult to acquire under a state of society where civil law prevails. Thus, if, by process of barter or purchase, I obtain a hat or a coat, the article clearly belongs to the category of *meum*. If some benevolent hatter or tailor should be eccentric enough to give me the same, then, as evidently too, it is mine. I hold it against all comers, law giving its sanction. The casualty of trover—of things found and appropriated—is about the only case of property acquisition that, under the benignant reign of civil law, can originate a doubt.

In war, vanish all the normal distinctions of peaceful life; then the human conscience, so erring at best, is thrown back on its own resources; then the line between *meum* and *tuum*, which we were wont to regard so absolute, is blurred to indistinctness; then altogether new ideas of property and its appropriation arise. I purpose to give some of my own experiences as gleaned during the late Franco-German war, *quorum minima pars fui*, having been a near spectator thereof; not living at hotels in the rear, but a guest of a Prussian rifle battalion, the 5th Silesian Jägers, whose duty it was to occupy the foreposts.

After Ducrot's final and abortive attempt at Chatillon, on September 19, to break through the investing circle, the Germans, without a moment's delay, began to establish three lines of defence, by holding which, Paris would be so completely locked up that, to use their own expression, 'not a fly could come out.' The troops I accompanied held ground at various points of the inner investing line. Between September 21 and January 18—the day of my leaving the Jägers, and return home—we bivouacked fifteen days and nights on the open, using such coverings as we could improvise. During the rest of that period, we managed to house ourselves, as times went, comfortably. Our battalion, the Jägers, always going first, we had the prior choice of domicile; the line infantry coming second. On us, therefore, devolved, in a superior degree, the responsibility of determining between *meum* and *tuum*. If we saw a house or houses suitable for the quarters of our company—as a matter of course, we would appropriate the house or houses. If occupied, we would billet a certain number on the proprietor or his representatives; if unoccupied, we would take possession bodily, using the property—abusing it sometimes, as best might suit our needs. On two occasions, outside Paris, houses were found big enough to lodge our entire company of two hundred and fifty men. Once this happened at Bellevue, once at St Cloud Palace—the latter big enough, in all conscience, if only the whole of it had been available; but the shells tumbled in so unintermittently that, with the entire palace to choose from, we were so obliged to huddle in cellars and lower rooms, that it made our palatial

residence anything but agreeable. How the French shelled us out at last, setting the palace on fire; how they drove us out on the open, compelling us to sleep in the rain—these are matters not bearing on the theme of meum and tuum.

The houses in our area of defence were mostly unoccupied; it seemed that everybody who *could* run away *had* run away. From first to last, I only met with one gentleman's house the master of which had not sought safety in flight, and even he had sent away his wife and daughters. Occupation was mostly fictional. Perhaps a decrepit gardener would be left, or an ancient serving-woman; still even this scant attestation of proprietorship was invariably respected by the Prussians. In these cases, a certain number of men was billeted, and *bons* given for their rations. Whether these *bons* will ever be liquidated, is a question on which my opinion not being asked, I shall not give it. If the proprietor had a carriage and horses, we used them, but formally, after a due tendering of papers. This seems fair enough, and if hard, so is war—*à la guerre, comme à la guerre*. Except under the formalities stated, nothing within my experience was ever taken from an inhabited house. Knowing as I do the stringency of Prussian discipline, I believe it would have gone hard with any one on discovery, who might have dared to do so. In respect to carriages with leather tops, a nice point of international law may arise. These vehicles, although used and restored, would not be found by the proprietors in quite so good a state as they left them. I apprehend the main point for debate will be this: Was or was not the usage, under the circumstances, fair and reasonable? Was it fair and reasonable—for example—to cut away the leather tops, converting them into boots? War casuists may decide; I shall not, limiting myself to the assurance that the appropriation was comfortable. Never more do I expect as a civilian to have the opportunity to purchase an excellent pair of jack-boots, coming nearly up to the fork, for the consideration of four thalers, or, in plain English, twelve shillings. If the housekeeper had anything to sell, were he or she a shopkeeper, then the harvest reaped was truly golden. No such event ever happened as that of a German purchasing a thing at his own price. On the contrary, I have seen many a little woman drive the hardest of hard bargains over a sausage or a red herring.

'But, Madame, you will not surely charge me half a franc for this poor fish? Herr Je! do you know what I should have paid for it in my country?'

'No, nor don't care. You are in France now, worse luck! Why didn't you stay in your own country?'

'Madame, I've paid for the coffee; now let me grind it, will you?'

'Il faut payer, Monsieur—payer toujours un sou, Monsieur.—Bien. Now grind away.'

'Well, Madame, and now about this small fish' [a red herring]; 'I can't afford half a franc to-day. Expect money by next feldpost: quartered opposite—trust me till to-morrow.'

'Trust you! Mon Dieu, non! Il faut payer, Monsieur, pay-y-er toujours—*toujours*.' Her ultimatum thus expressed, Madame would snatch the small fish away from the hungry warrior, and begin business with some one else.

At Versailles, a few miles to our rear, the chief hotels had to submit to a tariff imposed by their

conquerors. The *tariff déjeuner à la fourchette* at the Hôtel des Réservoirs was two francs fifty centimes; the *tariff dinner* three francs fifty centimes; but even under this limitation, French ingenuity was equal to the occasion. Should you breakfast or dine alone, you, of course, sat down under the protection of tariff regulations; but should you have invited a friend to breakfast or dine with you, then were you subjected to the following ingenious war practice. 'Tariff or first class, Monsieur?' the waiter would inquire with much solemn ostentation. 'First class,' of course you would say, which meant a dinner at eight francs; a price not so extortionate of itself, but worrying and provocative, when you found that, barring a tartlet or a lollipop just enough to swear by, you had exactly the same courses as the tariff people.

Houses completely deserted had but little mercy shewn them. Certain maxims were impressed on our fellows—certain war definitions propounded. The difference between lawful and unlawful constituted the burden of many a speech from major to captain, from captain to lieutenants, from these to *Feldwebels*, and so down to privates Fritz and Hans. But if in civil life the interpretation of laws varies at the hands of different expounders, by how much more may they be expected to differ when self-interpreted in war! Plunder was unknown to Germans in the late war: the word even had been expunged from their vocabulary. My friends confessed that in olden times plunder had not been unknown to Prussian troops; but now it was explained they were all 'nette gebildete Laute Plunder!' The very notion of it would have thrown the strongest of our fellows into hysterics. Still, things neither bought nor given *did* find their way into knapsacks. The question then arises: By what ruling of international law they fell under the category of meum? Either the English frame of mind is not well adapted to appreciate fine logical distinctions, or my English mind is exceptionally obtuse, but though the matter was explained to me again and again, I really do not now understand all the nice shades of meaning between plunder and requisition. I doubt whether any mere English civilian *can* understand them; for soldiers, it may be different. One particular expression for things neither given nor acquired by purchase never ceased to perplex me, indeed perplexes me still: *Auf die Mauer finden*—Anglicè, To find on the wall. I have known the most extraordinary things reputedly found on the walls—a purse of money and a fine fat buck, for instance.

A recital of one case of many that actually occurred is worth a page of possible instances. Our Jägers would come upon a gentleman's deserted mansion. Proprietor would seem to have been under the impression that by locking his gates and doors, the enemy would turn aside, and his property be respected. On that point there would come a difference of opinion with our fellows. Smash would go the outer gate, smash also the mansion door. In would march the troops, and, from garret to cellar, begin to explore. The garden, too, would be subjected to a curious scrutiny; prodded vigorously with swords and bayonets, especially such spots as had been recently dug, or were covered—rather too ostentatiously at times—with leaves and litter. The

French craftily, yet not crafty enough, had vainly hoped to find protection for their choicest wine-stock by removing it from the cellars, and burying it in such places. Champagne had been usually so treated, also the finer brands of Burgundy and Claret. Madeira, too, was not uncommon; and, what surprised me still more, port wine. The ingenious device spared us an infinity of trouble. It saved all the doubt and embarrassment of tasting, judging, and selection. Being not particular, we were always content with the best; and if the original possessor of wine did not know the difference between first-rate and second-rate, then, in the name of Bacchus, who should! We found out this mode of disposition by accident, and in this wise. It was on the 4th October, being quartered at Sévres, we overheard two women holding discourse. 'Mon Dieu! how the brigands drink,' quoth Madame M—— to Madame N——. 'Eh bien! let them drink away—such as they meet with; all the choice wine is put where they will never find it.' Alas! a Prussian was listening, and the Prussian knew French. Madame M—— possessed a husband, whom we forthwith requisitioned—took prisoner. Never more should Madame M—— enjoy the society of her better-half, until such time as she, or he, would see fit to tell us the whereabouts of that wine. She scolded, she remonstrated, she cried, but all in vain. Monsieur looked sulky, but gave no tongue. 'Get a rope!' said one of ours; on hearing which, Madame screamed outright and began to talk about her *petits*. The rope was brought; and Monsieur at the sight and smell of hemp divulged the secret. Poor fellow! I believe he thought of being hanged, though nothing so diabolical had suggested itself to the Prussians. They merely spoke of tying him to a tree until he should disclose. I do not think they would even have gone that length. But a prisoner he assuredly would have remained, and Madame would have lost his society. Monsieur not only disclosed where the bottles were hidden, but himself helped to unearth them, volunteering, moreover, the acceptable assurance that the plan of burying choice brands of wine had been much resorted to in the neighbourhood. Seventy-three bottles—all A1, as Lloyds' people say of ships—came to light on this occasion. Of a truth their contents were excellent.

I have already stated the difficulty of making discrimination between plunder and requisition, at least in certain cases. As to wine, there was no difficulty, as the following explanation will make manifest. 'Children,' the officers would say on entering a deserted house, 'there must be no plunder. We are not barbarians. Let us set those swinehounds an example. What we find, and really do want, of course we must have; but be very particular in taking nothing that you do not want.' Well, of course, everybody wanted wine, no doubt about that; but as to other things, we poor weak individuals were left each to the monitions of his own erring conscience. I make a slight mistake—everybody wants money too, but our chiefs inculcated that money, if found, must on no pretence be taken. This maxim, I have reason to believe, was generally followed. At anyrate, the abstraction of money would have been deemed unhandsome, and were the appropriation discovered, would have brought restitution and punishment. A lieutenant of ours was very fond of butter, and butter with us was scarce. So, one day, the report having

reached him that a certain widow lady had butter and cheese in some store hidden, my friend made a small patrol. Coming to the house—'Madame,' said he, 'you have butter, and I require it.' 'Butter have I none,' quoth Madame. 'Madame may err,' replied my friend; 'humanity is fallible. I will see and judge for myself.' So alighting, he entered, and very soon came upon an enormous chest. 'The keys, Madame,' said he. The lady demurred, but under threat that the ark would be violated in case of need, the key was brought, and the chest opened. No sooner did my friend begin to explore the contents, than Madame became violently perturbed, and when he came to a heavy money-bag, she screamed outright. He poised it in his hand for an instant, then returned it to the lady. 'Money I do not take,' said he; 'butter is what I seek—butter, *butter!*' Still turning out the contents, he presently came to a net-work purse full of gold coin. 'Neither do I want this,' said he; 'I cannot eat it.' Restraint so great, so unexpected, fairly conquered Madame. She gave him butter and cheese too, glad to be rid of him.

Being myself a civilian guest, living amongst Jägers, it suggested itself as fitting that I should in all ways conform myself to Jäger ways, and more especially in respect to the law of Jäger meum and tuum. Accordingly, I lost no opportunity of seeking information from my friends, not liking to impose on my civilian conscience a too heavy responsibility. The puzzling thing was this—my friends mainly restricted themselves to the inculcation of not what I might do, but of what I must *not* do. The Jäger code, said they, is somewhat different from the common infantry code. A *verpflicht Infanterist*, my friends would say, 'requires everything bright and shiny. He will stow away even the brass label of a sardine box. Now we Jägers don't do that; it is against our code. We are all educated fellows, you see, and behave ourselves accordingly. A *verpflicht Infanterist*, again, will often take trouble to appropriate some article too large or too heavy for transport; that, again, is not Jägerish. We Jägers, furthermore, hold it very disgraceful to "require" bad wine when good wine is handy; and for one of us not to know wine from cider, as happened to the Bavarians a few days ago, would be a crime of so deep a dye, that never more would a fellow committing it be accepted in Jäger society. You see we Jägers are a light corps, my friends would say in continuation. 'We march light; we cannot take much; so we are expected to be discriminating.' In short, the instruction was wound up by inculcating three precepts: Never to lay hands upon anything I did not from my innermost conscience fancy I wanted; never on anything too big or too heavy for transport; and in any case, to do the thing mannerly, without boasting or assumption.

It cannot fail to have occurred to the reflective reader that, quite independent of taking away, the question of using or not using articles alighted upon must give rise to the discussion of several nice points of war ethics. The most cantankerous of beaten enemies could hardly find fault with one's using such things as frying-pans and cooking-pots. Billiard-tables, pianos, and harmoniums too, might be used each in its proper fashion. But circumstances alter cases, especially in war. If one is cold, and dry billets not handy, then is it proper or improper to burn musical instruments? That

is the question. We solved it; we burned the instruments. Excellent fuel they were, so dry and well seasoned. Furniture we burned too. Excellent for that purpose it was, especially billiard-tables. As to my own taste, I prefer coal-fuel; but if timber must be used, then give me, if not a grand piano, a good massive billiard-table. Perhaps the use to which we applied carpets, as winter drew on, may elicit some expressions of dissent from hypercritical people. Our fellows made overalls and leggings of them, for warmth and solace, if not for ornament. People whose notions of German soldiers' war attire are formed on the appearance of those spruce and dapper troops they may have seen paraded under the Linden, can form no idea of the wild harlequinade that war licence tolerates, especially as to the nether limbs. What with requisitioned carpeting and gaudy horse-cloths turned into leggings, our fellows' walking extremities gleamed with all the colours of the rainbow. A good soldier, if he be not an officer, will turn all things which his conscience has relegated to the category of meum to present account. His capacity for bodily abstraction is insignificant. Having no trunk, only a knapsack, he can only appropriate, with any hope of removal, the veriest trifles. Officers are on a different footing; and the higher the rank, the greater his facilities. One magnificent chance the Jägers had of converting tuum into meum, and I will make bold to say, all things considered, a perfectly honest one. The second company 5th Silesian Jägers chanced to hold possession of the Palace of St Cloud, and I amongst them, on the memorable 13th of October, when the shells of Valerien and the Bois de Boulogne, maliciously hurled for no strategic reason that we could discover, set the palace on fire, burned it about our ears, and sent us forth to sleep all night in rain too, on the open. Up to the hour of conflagration, the treasures of this palace had been guarded with such religious care that, to my full belief, only one article had been requisitioned—namely, a porcelain memento, of no intrinsic value, taken from the Empress's bedroom. When flames broke out, and were found to be inextinguishable, we were all ordered to take what we liked. I secured, through bursting shell-fire, flaming wood, and falling ruins, three vases, a tea-service, some drinking-glasses, and a few books, &c. To my apprehension, all these trifles are invested with the quality of meum, as much as if I had bought them for hard cash. There are vases and vases, there is old Sèvres ware and new Sèvres. Having explored the palace through some hours preceding the conflagration, I had stood admiringly over many a vase of surpassing beauty and inestimable worth. They were then sacred. I did not even touch them. At four P.M. I might have had them for the taking, or, indeed, anything else transportable. But to have reached them, I must have explored, through flame and bursting shell, a distant block of the palace. With many a regret, I missed my prize; flame crept round and round, then a crash, and then fell vases, statues, and all into one abyss of fire. All night, and all next day, the ruins continued to burn, filling the air with a nauseous effluvium from scorched silken hangings. Night closed on a pandemonium-like scene. For acres, the gravel plateau was covered with statues, vases, and books rescued from the library, about two-thirds of the contents of which were saved in

tolerable condition, although for some days already the library roof had been destroyed by shell-fire, and rain had come in. Soldiers moved about draped in all manner of fanciful garbs. Around the stalwart shoulders of some, silken hangings were wound shawl-wise; others trailed yards upon yards of lace and embroidery. One fellow moved about wrapped in the Empress's silken bed coverlet. Under the red glare of fire, and amidst the statues, he might have passed for a magician. One jolly fellow, yielding to a prompting of fun, laughingly said he would make me bomb-proof, and thereupon began to wind me round and round with bullion-lace. Another followed suit, and then others, until the very weight of precious metal was more than I could stand under. This item of bullion-lace I seemed to fancy mine; but a certain traveller, living in the rear, and neither a Frenchman nor a German, acted as though his notions of meum and tuum were even more indistinct than my own.

If, in the course of this short narrative, I shall have succeeded in contributing to the general store of an important branch of knowledge, then shall I be content. Having begun by stating that the distinction between meum and tuum is easy under the dominance of civil law, I would wish to qualify that remark by a reservation, and it is the following. One can only learn in proportion to available modes of instruction. The possible cases of meum and tuum, as presented in civil life, are so sharply presented, and of lineaments so well defined, that they are cognisable to the lowest understanding. Their problems are so easy as to impute no merit to such as master them. It is otherwise in war-time. Then cases of the nicest shades arise, affording scope to the keenest intellects. No one who has not experienced it, can imagine to himself the strain of poor human conscience under such circumstances.

THE GREAT CHANCERY SUIT OF GOTOBED v. BLITHERS.

IN SIX CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER III.

THERE were two great events in the history of Rising-cum-Lark, which in former times had convulsed the population with excitement, and which had always been considered as beacons or landmarks in their annals. The first event took place in the reign of George II., when Mistress Tabitha Skirl was convicted of being a 'common scold,' or *communis rixatrix*, and, being placed in the castigatory or cucking stool, amply justified her sentence by the observations she addressed to the assembled multitude. The second event happened in 1815—the year in which the battle of Waterloo was fought—when Hannah Matilda Boggleberry, a charity scholar, dropped from the gallery of the church during sermon-time a quarto edition of the New Version of the Psalms, and the sharp edge of the volume struck the nose of Mr Gotobed's grandfather, who was slumbering below in the family pew, and caused that gentleman to utter an expression, which, as the clergyman said, was 'most unfortunate, considering the place and Mr Gotobed's position in the parish.' To these two memorable

events was now added a third—namely, the erection of Mr Blithers' manufactory of Patent Cacosmia, which, without unduly disparaging the former incidents, might be justly regarded as the most exciting and the most important.

When the fatal news was fully known, Rising-cum-Lark gave itself up to angry lamentations. Its society was cruelly troubled. Miss Anastasia Tomkins declared that the 'rapture of repose' was gone for ever, fare it well. The rector, as a kind of warning to the age, wore every day his very stiffest and largest cravats, which he had hitherto reserved for the bishop's visitations. The doctor cleared his throat. The military gentleman with one arm felt that something was required of him, and walked continually up and down the street, armed with his native ferocity, and a Malacca cane, which he carried like a firelock. Mr Barry O'Looney affectionately polished up an old black-thorn of his father's, with the remark, that, in the present state of his feelings, a bit of timber might be useful at any moment.

We should have been only too glad to relate how Mr Gotobed at this crisis shewed a noble courage, worthy of his glorious ancestry. We should have wished to tell how he followed the example of Earl Warrene before the commissioners of Edward I., and drew the mighty sword of his forefathers to defend his title to supremacy in Rising-cum-Lark against Mr Blithers and his cacosmia. But the truth must be told: Mr Gotobed collapsed under the blow. When the first violence of the shock was over, and his first outburst of passion had spent itself, a deep melancholy took possession of him. He was urged to expostulate with, to bribe, or to threaten Mr Blithers; but he only groaned and sighed. To the rector and Miss Tomkins, who were foremost in pressing him 'to do something,' he said that he had long foreseen that the tide of the thin end of the wedge was approaching. Now it had arrived. Everybody was introducing the thin end of the wedge into everything. He should never change his opinions; but he should be left alone, and all the inhabitants of Rising-cum-Lark would desert him. When Mr Gotobed said this, Miss Tomkins murmured: 'Though the herd should desert thee, thy home is'—Here she took out her pocket-handkerchief.

'No,' continued Mr Gotobed in a somewhat maudering tone; 'that fellow Blithers will go on as he has begun. Perhaps he will demand from me the inheritance of my fathers. I don't see that there is anything to prevent his doing so. But in that case I shall take my stand with such of the wolf-hounds as remain faithful to me, and'—

'They ought both of them to be hung—him and Mr Bubb,' interrupted Miss Tomkins. No lady was more particular in her grammar than Miss Tomkins; but on this occasion her feelings were too much for her.

The rector rolled his eyes; he would have shaken his head as well, but his cravat prevented him. His wife only allowed him four clean ones a week, and he durst not crease it rashly.

But while Rising-cum-Lark was thus bemoaning itself, Mr Blithers was all cheerfulness and activity. The navigators finished their work of destruction; and when they had levelled everything, and made the farm one great puddle, they celebrated their success with a frightful orgy of drunkenness; and after kicking each other about

the head with their hob-nailed boots, they left the village singing songs of a languishing and sentimental kind. But to the navigators succeeded whole regiments of masons, bricklayers, carpenters, boiler-fitters, and machinists. Row after row of oblong buildings rose in front of the windows of Gotobed Hall. An immense brick chimney, which bid fair to be the highest and ugliest in the county, became a prominent feature in the landscape. The foundations were laid of two streets of cottages for work-people. And, to crown all, a plot of land was marked out for building a fold to accommodate the sect of dissenters to which Mr Blithers belonged. Mr Blithers himself began to assume the airs of a successful general. His face became greasier, his laugh more rollicking, and he jingled the half-crowns in his pocket more offensively than ever. He walked about Rising-cum-Lark as if he was master of the place, and he chuckled the sample boy of the village school under the chin, and gave him sixpence, which the sample boy put into the school missionary box when he thought the master was looking.

A few months passed away, and the works approached completion. Mr Blithers announced his determination of giving a fête (which he pronounced 'feet') to celebrate the occasion; and sent a message to Mr Gotobed asking for the use of Gotobed Park for the purpose. And Mr Gotobed was in no condition of mind or body to resist him. The unhappy gentleman had remained in a state of profound depression ever since his interview with Mr Samuel Bubb, and the 'feet' drove him to despair. The week after Mr Blithers' message came, the Gotobed family left the village. It was whispered that they had taken a chalet in Switzerland, and that it was uncertain when they would return. The Hall was shut, and the picture of Sir Blazius de Gotobed was turned with its face to the wall. The victory of Blithers was decisive and overwhelming.

It is impossible to describe the consternation that filled Rising-cum-Lark when the Gotobeds left. There were no upbraidings, no complaints; but blank despair seized the little society. The rector's cravat became limp; the doctor found that in order to retain his practice it was necessary that the clearings of his throat should become sepulchral; the acute intellect of Miss Anastasia Tomkins gave way under the strain, and she took to *Lalla Rookh* and breakfasting in bed. But the state of feeling in the place may best be indicated by the following artless document, which was picked up in the neighbourhood of the red brick house near the church. From the handwriting and internal evidence, it was supposed by the finder (Mr Barry O'Looney) to be the first rough and hasty notes of a theme on Commerce penned by the niece of the county member. It ran as follows:

'Commerce. A very Early Thing. The Pheniciens sent their ships for tin—Solomon ditto for apes. Commerce necessary to go for tea, eau-de-cologne, furs, and other articles of food. Too much commerce Very Bad. Instance from own observation. Peaceful valley. Rasselas. Suggesting lines of poet, "In my cottage near a wood." Commerce enters peaceful valley with stethy foot. Where once the blithe thingumbob carolled its plaintiff lullaby smoke of commerce rises like (some nasty simile). Where once the bee entered the foxglove, horrid workpeople enter a factory. Sorrow in peaceful

valley. Peasants no longer twang the jocund dance or weave the mazy lyre. All desolation. Examples from history. Marins lamenting over the ruins of the Coliseum. The Earl of Tenterden weeping over Godwin Sands. (Is this right?) Moral reflection. Commerce is a'—

The manuscript here ends abruptly, but some friend of the fair writer had rounded off the last sentence by inserting the word 'beast' in pencil.

Rising-cum-Lark was indeed now lying in the very depths of humiliation. The enemy had come so suddenly, so swiftly, and so vigorously, that the citadel was in his hands almost before its garrison was aware of an attack; and worst of all, in the disorder of defeat, no one thought of resistance: no one, for a long time, was found bold enough to unfurl the flag of gentility, and lead the society of Rising-cum-Lark against the insolent boasting Blithers. But in their sorest need a second Joan of Arc arose.

We have not yet mentioned Mrs Gotobed. She was descended from the noble race of the Lairds of Tweedle in the Scotch borders, and boasted almost as high a descent as her husband. From a long line of bold ancestors—the most part of whom had been hanged for cattle-lifting, under the superintendence of the deputy-sheriff of Northumberland—she inherited a strong mind and a resolute will. In the olden times, the Lairds of Tweedle had stood no nonsense; and even in modern and more degenerate days, her own father, when one Angus Macpherson, snuff-merchant of Edinburgh, had attempted to serve him with a writ, recalled the chivalry of the past, and played with a garden squirt upon the countenance of the sheriff's officer. With such a family history as this, it may easily be conceived that Mrs Gotobed viewed with much disgust the pusillanimity of her husband. When, however, Mr Gotobed was sunk in despair, she felt, with the true instinct of a woman, that nothing remained for her but to snort; so she snorted. But when Mr Gotobed began to shew signs of returning health and spirits, she perceived that the hour for taunting had come; so she taunted.

'But what am I to do?' pleaded Mr Gotobed.

'Shew yourself!' retorted his wife with a look of contempt.

'Eh! What?' said he with a sudden gleam of hope.

'Shew yourself!' answered she, firing off her words like the successive fragments of chewed paper discharged from a boy's pop-gun, one missile propelling another.

'If I thought'—he began.

'Shew yourself!' interrupted she inexorably.

So, after a twelvemonth's sojourn in Switzerland, it was decided that the family should return to Rising-cum-Lark, and that Mr Gotobed should shew himself.

When the news was heard in Rising-cum-Lark that the Gotobeds were returning, the village was filled with exultation, and an undefined feeling that Mr Blithers' hour had come began to spread. On the day when the Gotobeds actually arrived at home again, the general enthusiasm knew no bounds. The young ladies of Miss Tomkins' establishment were ranged on the lawn with clean white pocket-handkerchiefs, ready to wave when the Gotobeds came in sight. Miss Tomkins herself stood on her door-step hysterically flourishing

the best drawing-room anti-macassar. A triumphal arch was erected across the village street, which would have been most effective, had not a cart, laden very high with barley, in attempting to pass underneath, carried off the whole structure exactly an hour before the carriage arrived. The rector appeared at his garden gate, prepared with a friendly greeting, and cheerfully brandishing over his head a copy of *Drelincourt on Death*. The school-children were drawn up in front of the school-house, duly instructed to cheer when the master led off with 'Hip, hip!' The sample boy read a florid address expressly composed for the occasion; and, being much disturbed in his sample behaviour by the knowledge that the boy behind him was possessed of a large pin, began with, 'Respected patron and patroness,' in a loud clear voice, and ended somewhat hastily with a gruff allusion to a 'bloody nose,' intended for the ear of him with the pin.

But amid all this festivity and exultation, Mr Blithers was unmoved.

'Ould Stick-i-th'-mud seems quite cock-a-hoop to-neet,' said he with his usual vulgarity to Mr Samuel Bubb; 'but he hasna seen th' works yet, has he?'

'Nay,' answered Mr Bubb; 'an' oh, my precious eyes, he hasna smelt th' cacosmia neither!'

When the Gotobeds arrived in Rising-cum-Lark after their long absence, it was dusk in the evening. They were delighted with the enthusiasm of their reception, which proved that some part of the population remained faithful, and was still devoted to the old family. There had been nothing at the time to remind them of Blithers or his hateful works. The engines had stopped for the night, the hands had left their work, and the buildings themselves were hidden in the misty haze of evening. Fatigued by their journey, but happy in the joyous welcome of their old friends and neighbours, Mr and Mrs Gotobed had gone to rest thinking only of the happiness of home, and their sleep was undisturbed by any dreams of the cacosmia.

From a sound slumber, Mr Gotobed was awakened the next morning by a deafening clatter, which he had never heard before near Gotobed Hall. It was the bell of the works. When the bell had rung long and loud enough to account for its cracked condition, a low ominous murmur began, gradually swelling to a grumbling roar, which at intervals was choked into a grunt, or stifled into a snore, or startled into a screech, or melted into a rumble, but always returned again to the same horrible monotonous roar. The general effect was something like half-a-dozen luggage-trains, filled with the contents of the Zoological Gardens, endeavouring to enter a tunnel all six abreast. Mr Gotobed looked at his wife, and his wife looked at him.

'Hush!' said Mr Gotobed; 'I think I hear something.'

'Oh! you do hear something, do you?' answered his wife with great disdain. 'I should have thought it was not loud enough, perhaps!'

Mr Gotobed said no more, but sprang out of bed, drew up his window-blind, and looked out. This is what he saw: exactly in front of his house stood the great manufactory of cacosmia in all the glory of success. From the midst of the works rose a gigantic brick chimney, whence issued

dense volumes of black smoke, which, gently wafted by the morning breeze, rolled in sombre masses through the trees of the park, settled in turbid clouds among the shrubs of the garden, and, bearing along an eddying whirlwind of blacks and smuts, darkened the very sky. Mixed with this smoke was a nauseous sulphureous stinking vapour, which had blasted the land as effectually as a simoom. Of the mighty elms and shady sycamores, once the pride of the park, fully one half had perished, withered to the roots; the other half barely struggled to exist in the poisonous atmosphere. The shrubs—the laurels and rhododendrons—had faded every one; and of the flowers, only a few of the hardiest survived, with shrivelled petals and drooping leaves. More than this, an intolerable odour stole through every crevice of the house, and among other places went up Mr Gotobed's nose and down his throat.

Mr Gotobed said not a word, but dressed quickly, and went down-stairs. There, even at that early hour, he found his steward already waiting to see him, and bursting with a long and piteous tale. There were no rents, said the steward; all the crops had failed; the oldest tenants talked of giving up their holdings; all the young plantations were destroyed; all the trout in the brook had turned up their white bellies in deadly disgust, and had been eaten for breakfast by Mr Blithers' hands; all the pheasants had been poached; and a rude likeness of Mr Gotobed, in the act of smoking a pipe and dancing a jig, had been sculptured on the lodge-gates. Never was such terrible news. Such a misfortune had not visited the Gotobed family since the time of the battle of Shrewsbury, when Wesel de Gotobed was discovered by Sir John Falstaff to have remained fast asleep at the *Talbot Inn* during the whole of that engagement.

Still Mr Gotobed said not a word. He left his steward, and went into the breakfast-room, where his family were assembled. The Misses Gotobed had been weeping; and the blacks mingling with their tears, caused their faces to look at once woe-begone and streaky. Mrs Gotobed herself appeared with an aspect forcibly suggestive of a Jack-in-the-box with a remarkably strong spring and the lid insecurely fastened. Still Mr Gotobed spoke not, till, having parted his coat-tails and taken his position in front of the fire in an attitude which, next to the Habeas Corpus Act, is the pride of the English nation, he at length broke out: 'If,' said he, 'there is law, or equity, or justice, or even common feeling still remaining in the British dominions, Blithers shall smart for this.'

'Of course you'll horsewhip him,' said Mrs Gotobed; 'my father, the late laird, would have done so a year ago.'

'I shall go,' said Mr Gotobed, not regarding his wife's hint, 'to my solicitors, Messrs Moon and Son, directly after breakfast.'

'Haven't I always said so?' exclaimed Mrs Gotobed. 'Haven't I always urged your father to take this course?'

Now Mrs Gotobed had never said a word of the kind; but her daughters, with true feminine *esprit de corps*, nobly answered: 'Often, mamma.'

'I may have been negligent,' said Mr Gotobed, 'but who could have foreseen such a thing. This,' continued he, turning fiercely on his youngest daughter, a rosy-cheeked child of seven—'this comes of your tampering with our old institutions.'

CHAPTER IV.

The poet Catullus sings of 'a flower which is secretly born in closely fenced gardens, unknown to the herd, and uncrushed by the ploughshare; which breezes fondle, the sun strengthens, and showers bring up.' Such a flower was Mr Ephraim Moon, the senior partner of the firm of Moon and Son, solicitors. He was brought up in the closely fenced gardens of the law; the common herd knew him not (his bills of costs being much too heavy for them); the ploughshare of legal reform had left him untouched; and his growth in wealth and social consideration had been cherished by the gentle rain of clients, and the fostering breezes of contested lawsuits. The poet, still singing of his flower, proceeds to tell us that 'there were no youths and no maidens who did not desire this flower.' The same could hardly be said of Mr Ephraim Moon without some reservation. Indeed, Mrs Moon, who, in respect of her iron aspect, might be described as a female Talus, would have effectually stopped the tender glances of maidens. And yet, spendthrift youths who wanted to raise money by mortgage, and heart-broken damsels who sought the consolation of actions for 'breach' in no small numbers, desired the kindly offices of Mr Moon. In a word, he was the head of the most respectable firm of solicitors in the county town which lay near Rising-cum-Lark.

To be the head of a firm of solicitors practising among county families, requires a combination of qualities which nature rarely bestows on one man. But to Mr Ephraim Moon nature had been kind. She had bestowed on him a frame whose noble proportions asserted themselves as cardinal virtues; and a stomach, the majesty of whose rotundity seemed to hint that smaller stomachs might be forgiven, but must always be despised. Assisted by art, she had adorned him with iron-gray whiskers of the mutton-chop order of architecture; a head of dazzling baldness; a nose faintly tinged by that auroral flush wherewith port-wine heralds its meridian splendour of purple; and a face severely wrinkled in the endeavour to account for its lack of expression. These gifts alone would have made a country solicitor of no ordinary kind. But Mr Moon had also acquired other gifts. A long and extensive acquaintance with the theory and practice of the law had taught him that to look his clients steadily and firmly in the face, while he twirled his thumbs, was the surest way of convincing them that nothing could puzzle him. Overpowered, indeed, by his mere presence, Mr Moon's clients no sooner looked on him than they were filled with hope and confidence.

Perhaps the reader may observe that nothing has been said with regard to Mr Moon's intellectual faculties. The omission is easily explained—he had none; or, if he had, they were so overlaid with his nobler qualities of body, as not to be observable. But he had a son and junior partner, of whose shrewdness and cleverness there was no doubt. And, though not expressly so stipulated in the articles of partnership, it was well understood that Mr Moon, senior, should never think if he could help it, and never express his thoughts on any pretence whatever. The junior partner did the thinking; his father was absorbed in maintaining the respectability of his convexity.

Thus, it is humbly conceived, should all happily constituted firms of solicitors be formed: the senior partner should be a man on whose respectability clients might rely, as on a rock; while the junior partner runs up their bills of costs. Such a firm is an ideal firm. Such were Messrs Moon and Son; and when Mr Gotobed consulted them, it boded ill for Blithers.

Into the presence of Mr Moon, senior, was Mr Gotobed ushered. Mr Moon had been reading the newspaper, but, on the announcement of a client, instantly became overwhelmed with business.

'One moment, my dear sir,' said Mr Moon with a deprecating gesture. 'A chair—the *Times*—one short moment.—Marks!' The last word was addressed to the mouth-piece of a gutta-percha tube, and produced a clerk from the next room.

'Has that distress been put into Bink's house, Marks?' demanded Mr Moon with much eagerness.

'It were put, sir,' replied the clerk; 'but nothing was found in the 'ouse except the cat, and *she* went up the wash-us chimney with her kitten in her mouth when the bailiff came.'

'Then has the fellow no means?' asked Mr Moon angrily.

'No, sir,' answered Marks. 'He's pawned everything except the clothes he stands up in; and he says that he'd have pawned *them*, if the weather had been warmer.'

'Has Jenkins made out Mr Lurk's bill of costs?'

'Not at present,' said Marks with hesitation. 'Mr Lurk, when seen last, which was in the company of a carpet-bag, said that he was going to see his cousin in the Rocky Mountains, and it was quite uncertain when he would return.'

'Never mind, Marks,' said Mr Moon with great solemnity: 'make out his bill. It *may* cheer him to know that his friends at home sometimes think of him. And don't giggle, Marks. That will do, Marks.—Now, Mr Gotobed.'

When Marks had withdrawn, Mr Gotobed told his sad story. And, as he spoke and dilated on his wrongs, visions of lengthy instructions to counsel rose before Mr Moon's mind, and his eye was moistened with the tear of commiseration; vast numbers of letters to be written and charged for occurred to his thoughts, and his brow was bedewed with the perspiration of sympathy; countless affidavits to be filed seized upon his imagination, and his ears tingled with the prickly sensation of rage; anticipations of enormous costs fired his soul, and his nose reddened with the noble glow of friendship: he grasped Mr Gotobed's coat-sleeve, and said, in a voice husky with feeling: 'Dear me!'

'It's a sad story,' said Mr Gotobed.

'A story, sir,' said Mr Moon, 'over which the well-regulated eye would shed a tear.'

'And what course should you advise?' asked Mr Gotobed.

'There is but one course to be adopted,' answered Mr Moon, looking his client solemnly in the face, 'and that is to—hum—see about it.'

'And what do you think of our chance of success?' inquired Mr Gotobed earnestly.

'I think,' said Mr Moon, staring more fixedly than ever at Mr Gotobed, 'that it is—probably—I'll just ring for my son.'

When the junior partner, without whom the senior was strictly forbidden to utter an opinion on any legal topic whatever, had appeared, Mr Gotobed

was compelled to relate his misfortunes afresh. Warning with his subject, he became quite eloquent, and the junior partner listened attentively to every word.

'Why, this,' exclaimed he, when Mr Gotobed had finished, 'is a case for a Chancery suit.'

'Which means,' explained the father pompously, 'a—hum—suit in Chancery.'

'Exactly so,' rejoined the son. 'The matter is as clear as day. We must apply to this Mr Blithers to put a stop to his nuisance; and if he refuses, we must file a bill in Chancery against him.'

'Well, gentlemen,' said Mr Gotobed, greatly agitated and excited, 'I put myself in your hands. This is not a trifling matter; this is no ordinary lawsuit. On the result of your exertions, my future and the future of my dear native village depend. I can hardly express to you the misery and anxiety that I have suffered on account of this horrible manufactory of cacosmia. But it is not for myself alone that I institute legal proceedings; no; I take up the cause of the whole parish. It has always, gentlemen, been my aim, as it was the aim of my forefathers, to preserve Rising-cum-Lark from the thin end of the wedge. Hitherto, the thin end of the wedge has never desecrated our hearths. And now—why, Mr Moon, you may judge of our condition when I tell you, that Miss Anastasia Tomkins, who keeps that highly respectable school by the church, has wept—actually wept tears, sir—incessantly for the last twelve months! And I myself, gentlemen, I have borne Mr Blithers' impudence as long as I can. The very worm when trodden on will turn again and rend you. Mr Blithers has for some time past sounded his own trumpet: I should wish him to hear what the judges of the land think of his conduct. And therefore I beg of you, and I authorise you, to do everything that can be done by the law; to retain the most eminent counsel; to carry the cause from court to court—in fact, to gain the victory at any cost. I am not a rich man, gentlemen, as regards ready money; but I have an unencumbered estate; and I solemnly declare to you that I will spend the very last shilling I have in the world in order to drive out of Rising-cum-Lark Nathaniel Blithers and the pestilential filth he calls his cacosmia.'

The junior partner heard unmoved the greater part of this incoherent speech; but he was nevertheless human: the peroration touched him. He rose, and grasped Mr Gotobed warmly by the hand.

'My dear sir,' he said with great emotion, 'you may rely on us.'

The senior partner said nothing; but, as his son spoke, his black silk waistcoat expanded and unfolded itself, till not a crease could be seen on its shining surface. Mr Gotobed cast one look of gratitude on such a magnificent emblem of respectability, and departed full of hope.

As Mr Gotobed rode home, he felt a different man. The lawyers had said nothing explicit, but they had comforted him. He felt that at anyrate he was no longer passively submitting; that the conflict had begun, and that he was taking up a position worthy of himself and his race. As he passed through the village, he had a cheerful nod and smile for every one.

'See who that is a-ridin' past,' said the village schoolmaster to the sample boy; 'but don't look out o' winder, which is rude.'

As the door was shut, and the chimney closed

with a board, a mind less gifted than that of the sample boy would have had some difficulty in interpreting this speech. But the sample boy rightly understood it. He looked out of the window, but so as not to be seen himself, and reported the result.

'Please, sir,' he said, 'it's Mr Gotobed, an' he's a-smilin' to hissell.'

'Ho, dear,' said the master, 'always say "hissell," and not "hissell." So he's a-smilin', is he?'

'Yes, sir,' answered the sample boy. 'But, please sir, I don't think he'll smile when he comes to the lodge.'

'Why not?' asked the master.

'Please, sir,' answered the sample boy, tying himself in an ecstatic knot, 'it's wrong to speak ill of one's neebours, but I think that Mr Bubbs or summun has been agate there.'

'What have they been a-doin' of?' inquired the master.

'Please, sir,' said the sample boy, 'it's wicked to backbite, but they've been coverin' the lodge with advertisements.'

The sample boy was right. When Mr Gotobed arrived at his lodge gates, he smiled no more. During the temporary absence of the lodge-keeper, an emissary of Mr Blithers had papered the whole lodge from roof to foundation with gigantic advertisements setting forth the merits of the cacosmia. Mr Gotobed set spurs to his horse, galloped home, and sent for his game-keeper.

'How are the wolf-hounds?' demanded he, almost inarticulate with passion.

'They're well in body, sir,' said the man, touching his hat, 'but very unconditioned in temper.'

'I'm glad to hear it,' said Mr Gotobed malevolently—'I'm truly rejoiced to hear it.'

THE POOR MAN'S DARLING.

A TALE OF HARD TIMES.

WHY did you leave me, Asthore Machree?
You were life, you were light, you were all to me;
Oh, our hearts are sad, and our cot is lone,
For we miss your face by the old hearthstone.

We cannot laugh, for we do not hear
Your merry laugh, love, so soft and clear;
We never dance as we danced of yore,
When your little feet beat the cabin floor.

But we gather round the fire at night,
And the white walls gleam in the ruddy light;
There we see your cloak and your little chair—
But oh, my darling, you are not there!

Your prayer-book is faded, old, and brown—
Here and there, as you left them, the leaves turned
down;
And oh, my darling, I even trace
Your finger-marks in some well-worn place.

Then each faded leaf I fondly kiss;
Oh, no relic of old is so dear as this!
And I weep, my darling, when none are near,
O'er the little fingers that rested here.

My gentle Eily, you came to me
In the cold dark hour of adversity;

We were very poor, but a jewel rare
Shone on our hearth, love, when you were there.

Dearer you grew to our hearts each day—
Every cold, harsh thought, love, you smiled away;
And each want in our love we soon forgot,
For you brought content to our humble cot.

Light was my heart as I toiled away;
For I thought of you as I tossed the hay;
And the fairest blossoms that round me grew,
My own little darling, I kept for you.

Blithely I sang when my toil was o'er,
As I sauntered on to our cabin door;
For I saw in the shade of the old ash-tree
Your smiling face looking out for me.

Ah, me! how your sweet blue eyes would shine,
As I climbed the hill with your hand in mine;
But you talked so wise, that you made me start,
And clasp you close to my trembling heart.

The golden autumn glided past,
And the dreaded winter came on at last;
While smaller each day grew our little store,
Till the last had gone, and we had no more.

Hunger, my darling, is hard to bear;
Still, without murmur you bore your share;
Like a patient spirit you hovered near,
In want and in sorrow our hearts to cheer.

Katey and Mary would cry for bread,
But you laughed and danced, love, and sang instead.
Oh, dear little heart! you were kind and brave;
You knew there was none, so you did not crave.

You sang when your voice was faint and weak,
When the bloom had flown from your fair round cheek;
In your tiny breast gnawed the hunger pain,
But your lips, my darling, would not complain.

Oh, 'twas sweet to feel your soft arms twine,
And your warm young face pressing close to mine.
'Are you hungry, love?' I would whisper low;
But you shook your head, and you answered, 'No.'

My darling! I saw you fade away
Like the last soft glance of the closing day;
As the dying note of some magic strain
That charms the heart, then is hushed again.

The shadows of death, love, dimmed your eyes,
As the dark clouds pass o'er the sunny skies;
And the drooping lids o'er those sweet eyes fell
At the last soft stroke of the vesper bell.

A little sigh—it was all I heard—
Like the fluttering wing of a captive bird;
And a sobbing voice, from behind the bed,
Saying: 'Father, father, is Eily dead?'